

# EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE FOR SUCCESS

## Bay-Brook Elementary School Baltimore, Maryland

Bay-Brook Elementary School has included Parent Tutors in the school improvement plan for the past four years. The Parent Tutor position involves a variety of responsibilities, including being available on a regular schedule and supporting the instructional program. This support is necessary to meet our goal of improved student achievement. The school budget usually allows us to pay minimum wage to a small number of Parents Tutors, but we never have enough funds for the number of volunteers we need.

As we have worked with our small group of paid and volunteer parents for the past three years, we have formed a relationship with the local office of the Department of Social Services. Our parents frequently must report their earnings or their volunteer hours in order to keep their benefits. This year the Department of Social Services approached the school about becoming a formal training site for the Welfare to Work Program.

Through the contract with the Baltimore Employment Exchange, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services Job Development Support Services Unit, the school provided training, a job description, required number of workers, and hours needed for work. The Employment Exchange screened applicants (clients) from our local DSS office, and placed those that met the criteria in our program. Through this exchange, the school did not pay any wages to workers. Workers received work experience credit toward their training hours and maintained their benefits.

The students, volunteers, and school benefited from this partnership. The school had a strong group of trained volunteers who were integral to the instructional program. Parents gained knowledge and skills to prepare them for future employment, and the Department of Social Services gained experience and training for their clients. Best of all, the children benefited from parental support at school and at home.

There are many individual anecdotal stories to be told about positive changes because of this collaborative effort, but we also noted some general encouraging and positive changes. Individual parents spread the word to others in the community. Parents became activists for themselves with the Department of Social Services instead of being intimidated and ashamed. Parents were more assertive in their interactions with the school staff on behalf of their children. The community became much more aware of the instructional program at the school. A group of

parents started the PTA. Parents who had been negative and critical of the school began to work in the program and became supportive of the school and staff.

The staff also interacted with parents and formed positive relationships that supported the parents and children in school and in the community. The staff saw how the children benefited from the tutoring, even when it was not their parent volunteering. The staff reported that the tendency of children to “carry exaggerations” home decreased, because they knew if the teacher was not able to contact their home, a neighbor would. And, when something positive happened, the good news was reported quickly, and spread throughout the neighborhood.

The children gained needed support and individualized attention from the volunteers. In turn, students became more respectful of all adults. Students were proud that their mother, father, aunt, grandmother, cousin, or neighbor were working at their school. Student achievement was positively influenced by the volunteers as children felt more at ease and were able to take risks without fear of failure.

Specific results of the program’s impact on student achievement are not available for this year because the program was implemented later in the school year. However, we are tracking the achievement of children in classes who had consistent support from Parent Tutors through the use of primary reading and writing developmental continuums. We expect children to move through the developmental continuums near age-appropriate levels. This year data will be kept from September, 1999 through June, 2000—with baseline continuum data from June, 1999 for grades kindergarten through five.

We will also collect data through surveys and questionnaires that will show the changes in attitudes, climate, knowledge, and job skills for parents, as well as staff and students. We are excited to maintain this partnership with the Baltimore Employment Exchange, and support our families as they support us. This has truly become an Employment Exchange for Success.

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